



THE FROMM INSTITUTE
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

FROMM FOCUS

The Newsletter of the Fromm Institute

Issue #2 • September 21, 2020

ANOTHER FROMM INSTITUTE FIRST: NO MORE MISSED CLASSES

Last week The Fromm Institute successfully held the first week of the virtual Fall Session classes. We ended the week, with over 1200 students enrolled, enjoying each other's company and learning collectively, all online. Though the pandemic keeps us away from Fromm Hall, this new technological format has allowed the staff to innovate, yet again with a new virtual classroom experience: delayed viewing.

In early August we began to get emails from students signing up for classes not only in the Bay Area but from other locations across the country; from the East Coast to Hawai'i. The program had quickly become one of varying time-zones! As a staff, we had to quickly come up with a way to accommodate as many different viewing times as possible. The Zoom platform allowed us to record each lecture but how would we ever be able to get these recordings to all those who were enrolled in the class. Herbert Gracia on the staff came up with the idea of creating private YouTube pages that can be accessed at a later date, or if a student misses a class they watch the class at their convenience. With these private pages in place, you can watch or re-watch a class at a time that is convenient for you.

Here's a bit on how the whole the process will work: If you are enrolled in a particular course, you will be emailed 48 hours after the class has ended. That email will contain a link to the private YouTube page, associated with that specific class. The recording will then be available for two weeks. At that time, as long as you sign in, you can view the class as many times as you want. The link is unique to your email address, so be sure to sign out of your personal YouTube account (if you have one), and sign in with the email you used to sign up for the Fall 2020 Session. If you do not have a YouTube account, please go ahead and create one with the email address that receives communications from The Fromm Institute. If you have trouble, please give us a call at **415-422-6805** or send us an email. The general email box is fromm@usfca.edu. Individual staff emails are below. Thank you for being a part of the Fall 2020 Session. We would not be here without you.

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Prof. Jan Wahl, noted Bay Area film critic, and Fromm Institute Faculty member has the spotlight in this week's *Express Yourself*. Submissions to *Express Yourself* are accepted on a rolling basis and can be articles, opinion pieces or notes, written by you, the students or others in the Fromm Institute family, who want to share something with the larger community. Email your submissions to **Scott Moules** in the Fromm Institute office (moules@usfca.edu or fromm@usfca.edu).

HERE'S A WORKING FEMALE FILM CRITIC!

By Jan Wahl

Recently there was a national study: male film critics outnumber female film critics by more than 75 per cent. This came as no surprise to me since I have been making a living in this profession for well over 25 years and still feel the loneliness of my gender. I often wonder if it is the “men don't like smart women” syndrome? “Just be quiet and be pretty.” “You look so much better when you smile.” Back in the seventies, I was among the first women Associate Directors at a TV network, told that no women ever got this prestigious job because men did not like to accept orders from a female. Perhaps it is the same with our opinions.

It is difficult today for me to find a young woman to mentor in the field of film criticism, though every time I find a woman of any age doing this work, I read or listen with special interest. One of the first books I devoured about movies was written by my favorite film critic Molly Haskell. Her seminal work *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* still sits proudly on my bookshelf. Rob Carver's insightful documentary (2018) *What She Said: The Art of Pauline Kael* has us celebrate this controversial but groundbreaking critic. Of course, there have been many others whose shoulders I stand on, as far back as the 1920's.

When the dismissive term “chick flick” became a part of our vernacular, I was outraged. Does that mean we can only appreciate romantic comedies, that war or adventure films are off limits to us? Can men not find their emotional centers with dramas or “weepies.” I could not find anyone to go along with me on this, and to this day will not use this offensive category in my writing or broadcasting.

The other night I was watching a Bette Davis classic: *Now, Voyager*. George Cukor directed the story of a woman who transitions from fearful to confident, falling deeply in love along the way. Her change from powerless to powerful is appreciated by both men and women. My husband, a war movie fan, sat down and joined me as the waves of great filmmaking swept over us. Davis's character crossed all gender lines, as does *Auntie Mame* or *Norma Desmond*. Will young men now only see a certain genre of film because it is a “chick flick” to see anything else? This idea is satirized in Nora Ephron's *Sleepless in Seattle*, but the



truth is not as funny.

Good movies are good movies, and gender has nothing to do with it. From *Field of Dreams* to *Saving Private Ryan*, from *I Remember Mama* to *Gigi*, we all celebrate and appreciate great cinema. All of us who review movies have our special passions. If a film has an LGBTQ theme (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Pride*, *The Celluloid Closet*) I will do my best to bring it to everyone's attention. When a movie is made, all too rarely, about an amazing female (*Harriet*, *Frida Kahlo*, *Madame C. J. Walker*, *Harold and Maude*, *Madame Curie*) I am front and center to critique it. There are powerful women in Hollywood today who have their own production companies. It is rewarding when someone like Reese Witherspoon reminds us that she is doing what she said in her Oscar acceptance, quoting June Carter: "I'm just trying to matter."

I would tell my sisters in any field of endeavor: have opinions. Back up that critical thinking with reasoning and supporting arguments. Find that niche that makes you different and worth listening to, make it fun. I'm not a female film critic, I am a movie critic. A showbiz critic. I hope someday there will be more of us.

SUBMIT TO THE FROMM FOCUS

The Fall 2020 Session is now in full swing and our now weekly newsletters are designed to both communicate with you about the Fromm Institute and the Fall session, but also to showcase content from the general Fromm Institute membership. The *Focus* seeks material from our greater community for three primary columns — **Poetry For A Lockdown**, **Express Yourself** and **In The Virtual Gallery**.

Our newest column **Poetry For A Lockdown** began with our stay-at-home orders commencing in March 2020. Again, we seek poetry, prose poems and other verse that contextually are about the COVID-19 experience and our state of mind during the lockdown.

Express Yourself was created a year ago and is mainly designed as a vehicle for sharing more general ruminations, thoughts and creative writing by the students and faculty of The Fromm Institute.

Without access to Fromm Hall and the Maier Hallway Gallery, **In The Virtual Gallery** is a recent column designed to showcase the artistic talent of the community. Photography, fabric pieces, painting and watercolors, moving images and sculpture are all accepted, so please share your creativity with us.

To submit to any of the columns for the Fall 2020 editions of the *Fromm Focus*, please email Scott Moules at moules@usfca.edu or fromm@usfca.edu.

POETRY FOR A LOCKDOWN

This week we feature two poems written by Bay Area author and Fromm Institute faculty member, **Lily MacKenzie**. If you would like to share your poetry which you've written during our current stay-at-home orders, please submit your work to **Scott Moules** either at moules@usfca.edu or fromm@usfca.edu.

Sheltering in Place

Birds visiting our backyard
have been sheltering
in place, building multiple nests
in our neighbor's overgrown trees
that touched the sky.

Tree cutters came at eight
this morning and began grinding
the trees to the ground, leaving nothing
but sawdust. The extra sunlight
we now get in our backyard
is blinding, invading our space.

I keep thinking of the many nests
destroyed with the trees
and their precious contents. If birds
think,
the ones now perching on the fence
dividing our yard from our neighbor's
treeless one, must also wonder about
them.

I'm identified with the birds and feel
our nest also has been smashed,
the new invasive light absorbing
all the lovely shadows
that once offered dark pools
where our eyes found shelter.

POETRY FOR A LOCKDOWN

The second poem written by Bay Area author and Fromm Institute faculty member, **Lily MacKenzie**.

Bursting Free

It's odd in this time
of Covid 19
and George Floyd
protests to watch
our many Lilies
of the Nile
trying to burst
from protective
pods.

Some are just
starting to break
free, though
the pod still
dominates, pointing
like a finger
skyward. Others
have blossomed, blue
petals breaking

loose, hungry
for light. On
this day
of Floyd's burial
it's not odd to see
life, death, and
resurrection
everywhere.
The shadows
our trees make
on the house
are in constant
motion from
a breeze passing
through, a shadow
play, but we're
the puppets
our lives contingent
on what nature
and culture
throws our way.

FROMM INSTITUTE AUTHORS

Fromm Institute member and author, **Barbara Sapienza**, has recently published a book “The Laundress,” whose protagonist was created in numerous writing classes at the Fromm Institute. Her writing instructor was **Prof. Cary Pepper** who alerted us to this serendipitous creation. We asked Barbara to write about her experience in conceiving the character while in class at the Fromm Institute. Below she explains that process. **The Laundress, A Novel** is available at your local bookstore (most offer free shipping) or from Amazon.

I have much gratitude to Cary Pepper, professor at The Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco, in whose class the characters Lavinia Lavinia and Zack Luce were born.

Little did I know that when I sat in a class intending to fire our imagination and creativity on September 11, 2014 with Dr. Pepper at the Fromm Institute, that seeds were planted for a character. He said, “character determines everything, a character is a real person.”

Then years later in a screenwriting class, Cary Pepper asked questions that inspired the creation of Lavinia Lavinia. She would become the protagonist of The Laundress, A Novel, published in 2020 by *She Writes Press*.

Lavinia Lavinia was born at the Fromm, birthed by his wonderful questions and easy style, in the seminar room where I sat at a long table, writing next to my classmates.

“What is your character’s name?”
“What are her quirks,” he asked?
Where does she look like? Wear?
What does she do? Any weird habits? Name a friend of hers.

And there it was!

Lavinia Lavinia, 26, lives in San Francisco in the Mission District in a studio apartment but she hangs out at North Beach. She likes to curl her hair with her forefinger, chew bubblegum, dance, drink espressos, eat tamales, and tip the baristas at Falcone Cafe with pieces of Bubblicious, her favorite chewing gum. She works as a laundress, detailing people’s clothes in their homes, and charges quite a bit per hour. She wears a vintage black tuxedo jacket, tight black pants and flat T-strap shoes.

Friends? I looked at the gentle and loving man sitting beside me, Jack Luce, and I wrote Zack Light, who would become her beloved “Grandfather” and teacher of sorts in the novel. I’m sorry to say Jack died before the publication and never got to know the ways he influenced me.

And thus my love affair with The Laundress began several years ago in Cary Pepper’s class at the Fromm.

Thank you, Cary Pepper, Fromm Institute, and all the MANY glorious writing classes, teachers, and writing friends over the past ten years.

Barbara Sapienza
September 15, 2020



USF SILK SPEAKER SERIES

SILK SPEAKER SERIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO PRESENTS MEGAN RAPINOE

12–1 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 12, 2020

[Register Now](#)

The Silk Speaker Series at the University of San Francisco welcomes you to attend a conversation with two-time World Cup champion and co-captain of the US Women's National Team Megan Rapinoe.

Join us for this virtual conversation about soccer, equality for all, and Rapinoe's role as co-founder of Re-Inc., a clothing company that embraces inclusivity and gender-neutral design. [**Learn more and register**](#)
Can't attend? Please register and we'll send you a link to the recording!

FISA NEWS • Fromm Institute Student Association • frommfisa.org

FOR NEWS FROM YOUR STUDENT ASSOCIATION PLEASE VISIT <https://www.frommfisa.org/>

Last week, the officers of the Fromm Institute Student Association ran this article of updated resources found on their website, frommfisa.org. For those of you who may have missed it, here's the information again. To reach FISA directly, please email them at frommfisa@gmail.com.

FISA WEB RESOURCES

We have added some resources to our [**FISA web pages**](#) which we hope will keep live our support for the Black Lives Matter movement and help to promote understanding of the issues. We have compiled both a [**reading list**](#) and [**movie list**](#). Regarding the movies, there are many more out there promoted by Netflix and other sites, but these are some of the stronger and are suggested in appreciation of Black filmmakers and their stories. All the works explore "the right to have rights" to reference Hannah Arendt's most quoted phrase.

These pages also offer resources that provide additional context for two of the classes being taught this session: Professor Alan Goldberg's class, *Black (and Brown) Lit Matters: Voices in Contemporary African American and Hispanic (Latino) Literature* and Professor Roger Birt's class, *Cultural Capitol of Black America: Writers and Artists in Harlem, 1919-1939*, looking at literary and visual artists who led the Harlem renaissance during the two decades between the end of World War I and the Great Depression.